Notice

The Office of Training's Language School changed its name during a reorganization of OTR components earlier this year. It is now known as:

The Language Learning Center

Address inquiries about language training to OTR/LLC, room 401, Chamber of Commerce Building.

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TOTAL IMMERSION -

CIA STYLE

Live night and day in Russian----or in French! Is that the best way to learn a language or is it a trauma that will turn off a student's interest in learning languages forever? And what can a student realistically expect to learn in that time? The Language Learning center (LLC) asked itself those questions last year, and started an experiment to find the answers. In October, 1973 and April, 1974, the LLC put groups of 12 students in Russian and 11 in French under conditions of "Total Immersion" (TI) at the learning all their waking hours. By the time this article goes to print, a third course will have been run in Spanish for 12 students as well.

"Total Immersion" is not necessarily the best way

for every adult language student to learn a second language. For a beginner, with no previous knowledge of the language, it is a system more likely to produce tension and fatigue than greater language proficiency, despite the advertisements of the commercial language schools. Since the beginner has no framework in which to absorb the new structures he meets, and no point of reference for new words he hears, he spends a good part of his early exposure to the language in sorting out what to him is a barrage of meaningless sounds. Immersion for him is largely a listening comprehension or passive exercise. However, for the student with some background in the language, the situation is quite different. A formalized TI environment with a faculty of native speakers to monitor and correct the student's speech is probably a better way to learn than living in the target country. In the actual target culture, learning is random. The speakers around the learner are listening more to what he says than how he says it. Out of politeness, they are not likely to critique or correct his errors at all. The learner is on his own to correct his mistakes, and he may not be aware of them. In a TI setting, his listeners are at the same time professional instructors. The listening and speaking environment is controlled, and is specifically designed to help students improve their oral ability. Students are made aware of their mistakes so they are capable of self-correction later on. For the student with a skill of S-2 or above, a TI experience can be extremely constructive.

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Total Immersion is, of course, routinely used in the LLC's language courses. Almost all students who are in full-time training for more than two months take part in at least one TI exercise lasting two or three And the results are consistently good. It is so popular and so productive an exercise that the house is filled with language students virtually every week of the year. The LLC had a basis of successful experience to draw on, therefore, in setting up its ambitious TI experiment at the But there were still questions to be resolved before making a decision to use long-term TI (i.e. several weeks) as a regular part of Language Center training. For example:

-----Can we, by compressing 300 hours of training into four weeks (instead of nine), reduce the number of weeks of training and get the same--perhaps even better--results?

----How well will students and faculty react to living together under the demanding conditions of TI training over 15 hours of teacher/student contact each day for 24 days, including 2 week-ends?

----What are the problems that are likely to arise in such training (fatigue, stress, boredom, group tensions, etc.)?

-----What teaching strategies are most effective (lectures, role-playing situations, formal grammar sessions, films, problem-solving exercises, group vs. individual activities?

----What is the best student mix (men and women, DDO officers vs. non-DDO personnel, various levels of proficiency, officers at different grades and experience)? And the proper student/teacher ratio?

----Can a program of strengthening general language skills be reconciled with a curriculum to teach specific professional vocabulary (i.e., can students at level S-2 move up to S-3 while spending a good part of their training time on materials related to Agency operations)?

With the answers to such questions as its objectives, the LLC staff worked with participating components to draw up a set of learning objectives for the students. As an example, here are some of the objectives of the

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French House. At the conclusion of training, the student was to be able to do the following in French:

- 1. Comprehend and transcribe numbers of all kinds including dates, names, places, even when given quickly or with some audio interference.
- 2. Give an accurate description of a variety of people, including age, physical features, facial characteristics, and clothing.
- 3. Describe the background of a person (including nationality, occupation, education, residences and personal interests).
- 4. Assess and evaluate people and facts in specific operational situations where there is conflicting information.
- 5. Arrange a meeting at a given time and place by phone; describe the place and individuals; understand the same details given back on the phone and report them to someone else.
- 6. Handle the first half-hour of an interview with a walk-in.
- 7. Gather information in a non-structured environment, such as a cocktail party, accidental meeting, etc.
- 8. Learn the vocabulary and structures needed to handle and train an agent.

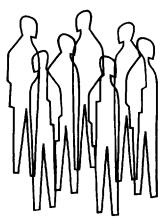
As the above list indicates, the daily program was one of constant activity and variety. Each morning started with formal grammar classes, followed by intensive work on current events. There were also student presentations, lectures, and demonstrations by language-qualified Agency officers, work-related role-playing problems, films, video tapes, social gatherings, parlor games, and sports----all in the target language. Only French or Russian was spoken, even during meals and the short periods of free time. The physical environment was decorated with target language proverbs and posters. In the French exercise there were even French grafitti in the men's room.

The students were exposed to so many different speakers in so many types of impromptu situations, that they learned to cope with the unexpected in the target language. At the end of the first week, most had overcome the normal inhibitions of a foreigner groping for the correct word or phrase and simply relaxed and spoke the language. Some even began to dream in it. As might be expected, listening comprehension skills improved significantly. Students often mentioned that they were overhearing and understanding conversations which they would have previously blocked out. And all of them commented

that, above all, they had greatly strengthened their confidence in using the language. On the last day, when asked to fill out course critiques, many felt they would do a better job if they could write the critique in Russian or French, since their stream of consciousness was in the target language.

At this writing, with two-thirds of the Total Immersion experiment completed, the Language Center has the answers to most of its questions, and the results are encouraging. We know that students and faculty can take up to four weeks of concentrated linguistic togetherness without feeling overly taxed; we know that the logistical requirements for such programs are not too difficult to handle; and most important, we know that long-term TI training produces better language proficiency in a shorter time. At the end of their month dents demonstrated an ease in speaking the target language that students in regular language training usually do not achieve. Their tested proficiency scores improved on the average of one full level in French and a half-level in Russian.

To judge from student and faculty reactions, then, as well as from measurable improvements in proficiency test scores, it appears that the long-term Total Immersion approach has real potential. It is expected that the Spanish program will confirm that tentative conclusion. If so -- although a decision has not yet been made -- it is possible that the Language Center will offer such training every year in selected languages. The plan for FY75 is to conduct such programs in French (24 February to 21 March), Spanish (7 April to 2 May), German (26 May to 20 June).



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ABOUT S-3

OPEN MEMORANDUM TO A BRANCH CHIEF

- 1. This memorandum is prompted by the observation of recent language students that there is $\frac{1}{2}$ increasing pressure within their divisions for them to achieve a speaking competence of level "3" (S-3) at the completion of language training. Since the Agency's Language Development Program has generally recognized S-3 as a proficiency goal for case officers in overseas positions, it is understandable that students from the DDO have that goal, and that their supervisors would encourage them to achieve it. You should be aware, however, that S-3 is not currently an expectable level of achievement for most students in a language school on U. S. soil.
- 2. Training records at the Defense Language Institute, the Foreign Service Institute and the Language Learning Center of OTR indicate that only students with a linguistic advantage can achieve S-3 in a training situation, i.e., students with superior language aptitude or who already speak some second language at a high level. Since S-3 implies a degree of poise in handling the language -- a confidence factor which has nothing to do with learning grammar or vocabulary -- it does not depend on the student's intelligence or motivation. Nor, oddly enough, does it depend on the amount of time he spends in training. Proficiency in a language increases with time in training only up to a point. Unless confidence can be developed through use of the language for survival or communication, most students make little progress after they reach S-2 or S-2+, regardless of how many more hours they spend with a teacher, even an outstanding teacher. This phenomenon, incidentally, is the basis for our experimental one-month "Total Immersion" program We are hoping to 25X1A simulate the conditions under which a breakthrough into S-3 can consistently be achieved.

3. Unless the experiment radically changes our expectations of what can be achieved through training, however, I would like to suggest that all divisions reconsider the emphasis placed on achievement of the S-3 level and follow the pattern that the State Department uses in considering officers for overseas

assignments. The FSO is required to study the language for 20 weeks, during which time he usually achieves S-2+, and is then expected to achieve S-3 overseas, before he returns from the field. In the State Department system, promotion is often dependent on his doing so. S-3 is still the goal, but the officer is asked to achieve it under conditions which permit it. In the meantime, S-2+ is an acceptable beginning level of competence for jobs in the field that nominally require S-3.

4. This recommendation is in keeping with the provision of the provision, which says: "Employees who are to be assigned to language positions and who do not have the needed language skills will be expected to take a prescribed amount of language training before assignment, with the understanding that they will achieve the required proficiency level during the tour of duty." But more importantly, it is an approach that reflects the realities of the problem. I hope you will give it serious consideration.

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NEW GERMAN TAPES

The Language Learning Center recently completed a new German tape series for listening comprehension at all levels. The series contains 64 selections including mystery stories (Fall of the House of Usher), adventure stories (Robinson Crusoe), folk tales (Till Eulenspiegel), plus political discussions, radio plays, and humorous dialect stories. Each tape is rated according to its level of difficulty. Descriptive tape catalog and cassettes for loan are available through the Language Center Library X3477. Ask for the German "LC Series".

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

I. End of BAHLT

The Before-and-After-Hours Language Training Program (BAHLT) conducted by the Language Center was discontinued as of 30 June 1974. Off-duty language courses in French, German, Spanish and Russian are now offered, however, as part of the Agency's Off-Campus Program.

II. Defense Language Institute Move

The Defense Language Institute, which maintained its Headquarters and an east coast language school in Anacostia, is in the process of moving all of its activities to Monterey, California, where its major training facilities are located. By 1 July 1975, there will be no Defense Department language training done in the Washington area except for military personnel studying at the Foreign Service Institute.

III. German for Secretaries

The Language Learning Center (LLC) now has as part of its course offerings a 30-hour (half-days for two weeks) course for secretaries who may need to handle telephone calls overseas in German. The course is intensive, and has self-instructional features; it teaches telephone German only, but does so extremely well. Dates for the course are negotiable, and classes can be set up if at least two students apply. Direct inquiries to Languages

(x3271).

IV. Three Scandinavian Languages for the Price of One

The Language Center recently ran an experimental course to teach Swedish, Danish and Norwegian reading in the time normally needed to teach only one language. The Scandinavian languages are very similar in structure; therefore,

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the course needed only to teach the conversions from one language to the next, after a basic introduction to Swedish. The course is potentially valuable for desk officers who need to translate newspapers or documents in Scandinavian languages. The experimental class demonstrated that such training is both efficient and effective. The Slavic/Germanic Department will conduct the course in the future if at least two students apply. (x3271).Contact

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The Agency has recently acquired a new capability in land, a language for which no speakers are on record in the computer inventory of CIA language assets. 25X1C

member of a very small fraternity of specialists in America, has recently joined the staff of the Language Center (x3271).

VI. New Headquarters Language Lab

The Language Laboratory maintained at the Headquarters Building in Room 1D1609 has been moved temporarily to GB1915. The Laboratory will become part of the new OTR Media Center which is scheduled to begin operation in Room GJ68 about 1 January 1975.

VII. New Arabic Training Program

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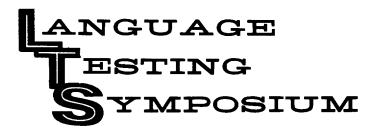
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As of 1 November 1974 the Language Learning Center will resume teaching Arabic as part of its regular curriculum. With the addition to the LLC staff of a native-speaking Arabinstructor, courses in reading, speaking and a native-speaking Arabic understanding are now available. Direct inquiries

, Chief, Near Eastern and Asian Languages Department (x3271).

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One of the primary missions of the Language Learning Center (LLC) is testing the language proficiency of Agency personnel. LLC staff members are not only involved with the administration of proficiency tests, but also in the research and development of new tests and testing techniques. On 13 and 14 March, 1974, members of the LLC staff took leading roles in a symposium on language proficiency testing which was sponsored by the United States Interagency Language Roundtable (CIA Language Center, Foreign Service Institute, Defense Language Institute, NSA Language School, HEW, the Center for Applied Linguistics, and the International Association of Applied Linguistics). Approximately 275 linguists and language teachers from the U.S. and seven foreign countries attended the symposium. These included 24 panel members, experts in the field, who read papers on language testing and discussed related problems and issues. Members of the LLC staff were directly involved with the organization and planning of the symposium, and had two representatives on the panel. In addition, approximately 40 LLC personnel attended the meetings as observers.

The purpose of the symposium was to bring together language testing specialists from government and academic institutions to discuss issues of common concern. The federal government has had vast experience in the field of language testing, but lacks the resources for extensive research and experimentation. Universities, on the other hand, spend a great deal of time doing research, but often need more practical experience. Language tests currently used in government programs, including the Oral Interview test used at FSI and the LLC, were described and discussed by the panel. The presentations were well received, and useful criticism was offered by some of the representatives from academic institutions. The government language community also profited by learning about new ideas and techniques in language testing presently being experimented with at universities in the U.S. and abroad.

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This old admonition takes on a very special meaning in many languages spoken throughout the world. When one thinks of a language with tones, the first one that usually comes to mind is Chinese. But Chinese is far from being the only tone language. Tonal languages are found throughout much of Southeast Asia, almost all of sub-Saharan Africa, and among the American Indian languages of the Western Hemisphere.

What is a tonal language? It has been defined by the noted linguist, Kenneth Pike, as "a language having lexically significant, contrastive, but relative pitch on each syllable." The key phrase is "lexically significant" -- the meaning of the word changes with an alteration in tone. In other words, a change in tone is as significant as a change in a consonant or a vowel.

How many tones make a tone language? -- as few as two in some African languages, or as many as nine in Cantonese.

But are tones really important? Some language students incorrectly feel that it may not really be necessary to use tones correctly, that people will understand words because of context. This view is sometimes held by GIs who served in Vietnam and may have learned barroom Vietnamese, where there was little doubt about what was intended. Also, GIs usually spoke with bartenders, shopkeepers, customs officials, etc. -- people accustomed to dealing with foreigners. But there are many times when context is not enough. It is easy to cite examples in which two or three words, distinguishable only by tone, may all be meaningful -- though with different meanings -- in a given situation. Suppose you wanted to rent a villa in Laos and you asked the owner if it were permissible to keep a maa in the house. You might create a very uncomfortablesituation if he thinks you mean maa (low tone) which means "horse" instead of maa (low rising tone) which means "dog". Or consider this example from Vietnamese. The word bon (level tone) means "to flee from", but bon (rising tone) means "to follow". Thus Tôi bon anh means "I am fleeing from you", while Tôi bon anh means "I am following you" -- a 180 degree difference.

Things can become comical as well as confusing. Even in Japanese, though not usually considered a tonal language, differing tonal patterns may be lexically significant. Depending on the tonal pattern, the word hana can mean "flower" or "nose". Which one did you say you were plucking?

Wrong choice of tone can also be embarrassing or insulting. In Vietnamese the word không placed at the end of the sentence converts a statement into a question. But if the same word is pronounced with an English question intonation pattern (i.e., a rising tone) it becomes an obscenity.

A change in tone can also indicate a grammatical change. In Lingala (spoken in Zaire), the word nasálá (high tone on the last two syllables) means "I worked", but násála (high tone on the first two syllables) means "if I were to work".

There are countless stories of how "tonal error" has led to confusion in communication. Some stories are hilarious, others embarrassing. These few examples should suffice to make the point that tones are important features of language. The main thing to remember is that to change the tone is to change the meaning. And meaning is what language is all about.

languages QUIZ 2

Match the languages in column I with the country of primary use in column II.

- 1. Shan
- 2. Flemish
- 3. Tigrinya
- 4. Zulu
- 5. Singhalese
- 6. More
- 7. Lingala
- 8. Rhade
- 9. Wes-Kos
- 10. Maori
- 11. Croatian
- 12. Sundanese
- 13. Cree
- 14. Ukrainian
- 15. Visayan

- a. Sierra Leone
- b. Philippines
- c. Indonesia
- d. USSR
- e. New Zealand
- f. United States
- g. Sri Lanka
- h. Burma
- i. Ethiopia
- j. Upper Volta
- k. Yugoslavia
- 1. South Africa
- m. Zaire
- n. Belgium
- o. Viet Nam

ANSWERS

1. h; 2. n; 3. i; 4. 1; 5. g; 6. j; 7. m; 8. o; 9. a; 10. e; 11. k; 12. c; 13. f; 14. d; 15. b.

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The Language Learning Center still has a limited supply of all back issues of Language Highlights. If you are interested in obtaining a copy or copies to read or reread a particular article, call x3271.

WHAT'S YOUR LANGUAGE SPEAKING PROFICIENCY?

Level An individual must be able to:

- Satisfy minimum courtesy requirements, usually with frequent errors and with sharply limited vocabulary. Handle simple situations of daily life and travel, such as getting temporary lodging, asking and giving simple directions, ordering a plain meal, and making purchases. Pronounce the language at least well enough to be understood by a native speaker accustomed to dealing with foreigners. Understand simple questions and statements, allowing for slowed speech, repetition, or paraphrase.
- Satisfy routine social demands, such as formal introductions and casual conversations about current events, work, and autobiographical information. Converse confidently, if not with facility, with people he deals with in the course of daily activities. Use basic constructions accurately, with acceptable weaknesses in more complex structures and some deficiencies in vocabulary. Pronounce the language generally intelligibly, though occasionally producing misunderstood words or phrases. Get the gist of most conversations on general subjects which require no specialized knowledge.
- Speak with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations in social, professional, and other daily situations. Respond in unfamiliar situations with reasonable ease, using a vocabulary broad enough so that he rarely has to grope for a word. Speak with good control of grammar, making occasional minor errors which do not interfere with communication. Pronounce the language with an accent which, though obviously foreign, is always understandable. Comprehend most of what is said at a normal conversational rate of speech.
- Use the language fluently, idiomatically, and accurately in all non-technical situations, with extensive and precise vocabulary, nearly perfect grammar, and an accent closely approximating that of native-born speakers. Understand the content of all conversations and formal presentations within the range of his experience, missing only those further refinements mentioned in the "5" category.
- Use the language in a manner equivalent to that of an educated native-born speaker. Speak fluently and accurately in all practical and social situations, and freely and idiomatically in his special fields. His speech on all levels will be fully accepted in all of its features, including breadth of vocabulary, idioms, colloquialisms, and pertinent cultural references. Understand all nontechnical conversations and formal presentations, as well as technical discourse in his field.